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Approved For Release 2005/04/18 : CIA-RDP66B00403R000400220004-8

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OCI No. 2290/64

12 August 1964

DCI BRIEFING FOR THE HOUSE  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

THE TONKIN GULF CRISIS

- I. During the week preceding the attacks on the US destroyers, Hanoi stepped up its propaganda efforts to build a public case over alleged US "aggressive acts" against North Vietnam.
  - A. There were numerous indications by 1 August that an assault was being planned, including shadowing sorties by North Vietnamese vessels. Top-level authorization for the attacks appears to have come from Hanoi.
  - B. In the 2 August torpedo attack at least one of the DRV vessels was sunk, and two others damaged. Another was probably sunk and one damaged in the 4 August attack which occurred some 60 miles off the North Vietnam coast.
- II. On 5 August, US aircraft struck three North Vietnamese patrol/torpedo boat bases and a POL storage facility near the coast at Vinh.

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- A. The damage from these strikes, estimated from post strike aerial photography and pilot reports, suggests that 8 patrol/torpedo vessels were sunk, and 20 others damaged. Well over half of North Vietnam's estimated 46 patrol/torpedo vessels, therefore, have been destroyed or damaged by US action since 2 August.
  - B. Twelve of the 14 storage tanks in the petroleum complex were destroyed. This facility contained at least 10 percent of North Vietnam's total fuel storage capacity.
  - C. There was heavy antiaircraft fire over some target areas. Two US aircraft were shot down and two were damaged. One of the pilots was captured by the Vietnamese, and there are indications that the other was killed in the shootdown.
- III. Both Peiping and Hanoi have avoided any specific threats of retaliation for the US strike. The North Vietnamese, while maintaining a cautious and defensive posture, have claimed, however, they are not "cowed." The Chinese have said flatly that "aggression" against the DRV means "aggression against China."

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A. Peiping has also laid the groundwork for a public admission of military assistance to Hanoi in the wake of the US strike.

As a result of the US "aggression," Peiping says it now has the "right" to send aid "in every possible form."

B. Mass propaganda rallies designed to whip up popular indignation have also been held in many Chinese cities since the US action.

IV. Chinese Communist assistance, in the form of combat aircraft, has already been supplied to the DRV.

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- B. We believe additional deployments of Chinese fighter aircraft, closer to North Vietnam, have taken place since the US air strike.
- V. There are indications that some repositioning of Chinese ground forces may be in prospect in the South China area.
- VI. Soviet reaction to the crisis has so far been mild. There are no indications of Soviet military movements in response to the US strike, and Moscow's propaganda, while critical of Washington, has refrained from promising retaliation, or even increased military support for North Vietnam.

A. Western governmental reaction to the US air strike has, on the whole, been favorable to Washington. Some leftist and neutralist states in Asia, however, are questioning the justification of the US action, doubtless fearing for their own safety should hostilities resume and spread in the Asian area.